

Copy of
letter to Anna Stout
in California

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April 5, '76.

Dear Anna,

It is quite natural that we feel sad when we know the value of Dhamma and we would like to help others but it seems the others cannot be helped yet. Now you have that experience, many, both monks and laypeople have. A monk or wife, relatives, and for a monk it happens that he has to help his monks to live according to the Dhamma. They are not really it. But our life is such that there are pleasant experiences and unpleasant experiences. Each one has his different accumulations, good and bad tendencies, which have been carried on from one citta to the next one, from life to life. When we read the 'Jatakas' (Birth-stories of the Buddha, when he was Bodhisatta) we see time and again that people repeat the good or bad actions in different lives. The Buddha often told stories of people's past lives, to let people see that it all has conditions that we behave in this or in that way. When we understand more how certain tendencies are accumulated in the citta, and how it is really beyond control, not self (anatta), what kind of citta arises at this or at that moment, at least it will help us to have more understanding when we notice akusala cittas of others. We cannot control our own mind, let alone the other person's mind. But there are ways we can help: when sati is being developed in the right way, it also helps us to know when to say something and when it is better not to say anything. I learnt a lot of Khun Sujin, I found she always knows exactly the right thing to say to the right people and the right way to help others, exactly right for that person. When one is still beginning, like me, it is difficult, and still, we know sati is the only way to cope with our troubles in life, there is no other way.

Therefore, I would like to say first a little about the practice. You said you studied a year in Bangkok, but I would like to ask: did you see Khun Sujin and were you with the great teacher, Dhamm-dharo (Phra Allen)? The teacher will be an example of what I said above. He is a great teacher, it takes years before all misunderstandings are cleared up. I have to go to Thailand again and again to get a calm state of mind and are we upset when it is disturbed? We all have that, but is this the right practice? Khun Sujin taught us right understanding about this. But, to apply it is always difficult. Things are not as we would like them to be, and wanting to change them, what kind of citta is that? It is a citta with lobha, when we desire a quiet state of mind. It happens all the time, it is life: things are not the

way we would like them to be. It is aversion, dosa, if we do not like unpleasant situations. We ourselves have accumulated plenty of lobha, dosa and moha (ignorance). But any nāma or rūpa can be object of awareness. We should not try to change our dosa, that is impossible. When the citta is with dosa, are there not namas and rupas, appearing one after another, think about the unpleasant sound with dosa, but what are the realities, appearing one after another? The thinking about the story, a concept, is a rūpa, but also just sound, that what we hear through ears is a rūpa. Or the experience of sound, which is an a nāma, different from rūpa and different from the nāma which thinks about the story. And are there no hardness, softness, heat, cold, pressure appearing through body-sense? Anything which appears can be object of awareness, we should not eliminate aversion, it can also be object of awareness. Our thinking with sadness about something is only a kind of nāma, only a kind of thinking. It arises because we have accumulated aversion.

Would you write to me the way you have learnt sati in Bangkok? I ask this because some people teach sati to others. They mix tranquil meditation (samatha) and vipassanā. When we cry there can be moments of awareness in between. They just arise and we do not have to do anything about that, otherwise it is forcing sati.

I cannot say anything about what you have to do to others, because it all depends on the cittas which arise at this or at that moments. When there can now and then be a moment of right sati, not forced sati, no mixing it up with tranquillity, no choosing of the object of awareness (it does not matter what appears, it may be very akusala) then also it helps us to say and do the right thing for others. You will know this by experience.

When the situation for you is such that it is better for you to live elsewhere and you cannot help others (they are beyond help) well, if there is sati, the cittas will know what to do, and the right decision can be made. As to your brother, if there is an opportunity to let him help others with something, it is good for his kusala cittas and that would be a way to help him without mentioning Dhamma, since he is not ready for it. If people are ready for it they give some sign in their questions. Your brother's accumulations are such that he acts like he acts, but sometimes a change for him, living outside his home could help him if he is with the right friends. We have to accept it that we cannot control him.

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It is not always so easy to be full of mettā and karunā (unselfish love and compassion), but it is the Buddha's teaching. When there is just a short moment of awareness, do you know that there is mettā (adosa) ^{everywhere} with the citta, since it is accompanying every kusala citta? You do not have to 'feel' mettā, there does not have to be anybody present to have mettā. ^{But you must always think of it} Thus mettā can be accumulated. A person with mettā and karuna cannot help but having a wholesome influence on others, no boundaries for mettā and karuna. That is the way kusala works, it is so powerful, we should have such confidence in kusala, even if we cannot notice its wholesome influence on others. We may not notice it ourselves that we can help others. Maybe after a long time it can be noticed.

All kinds of kusala are valuable, life is so short. If you can give a small gift to your brother when there is an occasion it can help him too. It can make him softer.

When he gets older and he sees death in the family it may make him think, but we do not know how he will develop. If he would have confidence in you and tell you his troubles it would be good. My father wanted my brother to be exactly like him and this is partly a condition for my brother's failure in life, but, most of all his accumulations. But, there is good in my brother too, he likes to help, he feels pleased if one asks something from him. However, since he does not pay his debts my father lies awake at night. You see, what you write is so usual, for many families, just like death. Death is so usual in any family.

When people are not ready for the Dhamma we like to help them with kusala citta anyway. I read letters from Dhamma friends in Bangkok to my mother, and she appreciates it.

With all best wishes,